The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

6

Story & Art by
Aya Shouoto

CHAPTER 20

I CAN'T SEE YOU IN THAT WAY.

I'M SORRY.

A Young Girl's Heart Is Lost, Then Found
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The Mysterious Residents of Momochi House

Aoi Nanamori

When he was 7 years old, he wandered into Momochi House and was chosen as the Omamori-sama. He transforms into a nue to perform his duties, but it seems this role was meant for Himari.

Omamori-sama (Nue)

An ayakashi, or demon, with the ears of a cat, the wings of a bird, and the tail of a fox. As the Omamori-sama, the nue protects Momochi House and eliminates demons who make their way in from the spiritual realm.

Yukari

One of Omamori-sama's shikigami. He's a water serpent.

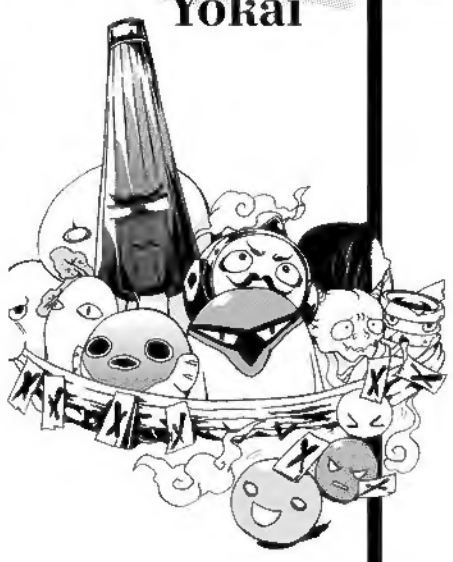
Ise

One of Omamori-sama's shikigami. He's an orangutan.

Himari Momochi

A 16-year-old orphan who, according to a certain will, has inherited Momochi House. As rightful owner, she has the ability to expel beings from the house.

Lesser Yokai



Momochi House: Story Thus Far

It's summer at Momochi House, and Aoi leads everyone through a rear screen to cool off in the spiritual realm. They visit one of seven sacred falls of Ryujin, a place that was once home to Yukari. They discover that the falls have been polluted by tainted water that is transforming Ryujin into a cursed god. Himari offers herself as a sacrifice to pacify Ryujin's anger and jumps into the waters. There she learns of Yukari's tragic past and Ryujin's true intentions. Yukari and Himari save Ryujin, but the Nue finds a suspicious paper seal floating in the water... The following day, Himari and Hayato are invited by their classmates to a scare dare. The two are cursed by a "human-faced" boulder who says they must kiss within one week or die. This compels Himari to confess her love to Aoi, but...

LET'S GO INSIDE BEFORE THE WATERMELON IS GONE.

HE...

SMILE

...

WAS I...

OKAY...

HUH?

...JUST REJECTED?

YAY

YAY

...

MNCH

MNCH

HIMARI.

HERE.

YOU'VE GOT A SEED STUCK TO YOUR CHEEK.

SUFF

HUH?

...

SPOOSH

I ATE WATER-MELON, AND THEN HAD DINNER AS USUAL.

NOW I'M TAKING A BATH.

WAIT...

DAZED

I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL AND GET MY BAG.

WHY DID I WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

!

SPLASH

THAT'S RIGHT—THAT CURSE...

THE MARKING FROM THAT STONE... IT'S GONE.

KLAK

TMP
TMP
TMP
?!
YOU'RE SURE? THE CURSE IS BROKEN?!
HUH?
UM...
UM...
FRET
FRET
LET ME SEE YOUR RIGHT HAND, HIMARI.
KASHA SAID THE MARKING WOULD DISSOLVE IN THE BATH, BUT I DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, HIMARI?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE, AOI?!

HUH?

AOI, WHY...?

DIZZY

I FEEL FAINT.

OH NO...

HOW CAN HE BE SO CASUAL ABOUT THIS?!!

GURK

BONK

TING

FLAP FLAP

DIDN'T THINK...?

I'M SORRY, HIMARI. I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT THE CURSE, I DIDN'T THINK...

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU BARGED IN ON A GIRL IN HER BATH, AOI.

I'VE BEEN REJECTED...

I KNOW HE HAS THE INNOCENCE OF A 10-YEAR-OLD, BUT...

IN ANY CASE...

IS THAT...

...BECAUSE HE SEES ME AS FAMILY?

I'M SORRY.

I CAN'T SEE YOU IN THAT WAY.

AOI DOESN'T HAVE ROMANTIC FEELINGS FOR ME.

GOOD MORNING, HIMARI.

DESPITE THAT...

CHIRP

BLINK

DAZZLING

DESPITE THAT...

I JUST CAME IN TO WAKE YOU UP. BREAKFAST IS READY.

AOI... YOU'RE IN MY BED AGAIN.

YUP

IT'S TO COMMISERATE YOUR BITTERSWEET PASSAGE INTO WOMANHOOD...

AH, I MEANT TO SAY COMMEM-ORATE...

WELL...

WHY ARE YOU SERVING SEKIHAN AND A WHOLE SNAPPER FOR BREAK-FAST?

LOITER

DID AOI TELL YOU...

CHEER UP, HIMARI!

THIS GUY TOLD US EVERYTHING.

DONK

JOLT

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME...

DOM DOM DOM

Rejected!

Rejected!

Oh yeah! Rejected!

Dance! Dance and forget!

WE WROTE YOU A SPECIAL SONG FOR BEING REJECTED!

FLUMP

VISH

I DIDN'T MEAN THAT LITERALLY...

IN THAT CASE, WHY NOT USE THIS BLANKET YOKAI?

WHATEVER. I JUST WANT TO GO HIDE UNDER THE COVERS...

GETTING REJECTED BY AOI CAN'T BE EASY. I GIVE YOU CREDIT.

OH

YOU'RE ALL ENJOYING THIS!

I'M GOING TO SCHOOL!

BLUSH

AT TIMES LIKE THESE...

...I WANT TO BE BY MYSELF SOME-WHERE QUIET.

SCHOOL IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE I CAN WALLOW IN MY MISERY...

WHA-?!

SHOOT

Is it written all over my face?

WHY IS HAYATO SO INTUITIVE ABOUT THINGS THAT DON'T INVOLVE SPIRITS?!

...

WHAT'S THE MATTER? DID YOU GET REJECTED OR SOMETHING?

GASP

KRRK

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, BUT...

SUFF

...CHEER UP.

I LOVE HIS UNDER-STATED GOOD LOOKS!

OH!

HE'S A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES.

THAT'S OKAY. I FOUND A NEW OASIS OF LOVE. HIS NAME IS NATCHI.

"NATCHI"?

HE'S A GOOD GUY...

HAYATO...

MOVED

KRRK

SQUEE

HOLD ON... IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.

I'M IN SHOCK!

HAYATO REALLY CARES FOR HIMARI...

But he's still cool!

DID YOU SEE THAT?

WHAT?!

HE'S HERE!

WHY IS NATCHI IN OUR CLASS-ROOM?

CHATTER

KRRK KRRK

"NATCHI"...

...IS OUR NICKNAME FOR NACHI, A CLASSICAL LIT TEACHER FILLING IN WHILE THE REGULAR TEACHER IS OUT ON MATERNITY LEAVE.

That's right!

SQUEE

HOW DO YOU KNOW SO MUCH, SENOO?

BLUSH

HUH?

IS "NATCHI" FEMALE ...?

BECAUSE I IDOLIZE NATCHI.

SO THIS IS...

UH...

MR. IWASAKI IS OUT SICK TODAY, SO I'LL BE TEACHING YOU.

CHAK

ALL RIGHT, TAKE YOUR SEATS.

Y-YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE MY ADORATION IS IMPURE! MR. NACHI-

I'M TAKAMURA NACHI.

LET'S START FROM PAGE 9 OF *UGETSU MONOGATARI.*

I LOVE HIS VOICE. I'M GLAD I CAME TO CLASS.

HE'S SO HOT.

I SEE...

HE SEEMS NICE. I CAN SEE WHY HE'S POPULAR.

BUT WHY ARE YOU SO CRAZY ABOUT HIM, SENOO?

BECAUSE MR. NACHI WAS BORN HERE, AND HE'S BEEN RESEARCHING LOCAL FOLKTALES AND MYSTERIOUS INCIDENTS.

IF YOU GO TO HIS OFFICE AFTER SCHOOL, HE'LL TELL YOU ALL KINDS OF INTERESTING STORIES. THERE'S A GROUP OF US WHO VISIT HIM NEARLY EVERY DAY.

YOU'RE SUCH AN OCCULT FREAK.

I'M SURE YOU HAVE ULTERIOR MOTIVES SINCE YOU'RE THE ONLY GUY WHO ATTENDS.

H-HOLD YOUR RUDE COMMENTS UNTIL YOU HEAR ONE OF HIS STORIES!

ESPECIALLY THE ONE ABOUT THE GHOSTLY STUDENT WHO APPEARS IN KAGOME PARK. IT'S SPINE-CHILLING...

KAGOME PARK?

I HEARD THAT STORY WHEN I WAS A KID. IT WAS ABOUT A KIDNAPPER DRESSED IN BLACK.

IT'S JUST A STORY TO TEACH KIDS TO BEWARE OF STRANGERS.

GHOST STORIES, HUH...

MOMOCHI, PLEASE INTERPRET THIS PASSAGE.

...

KRRK

OH NO! I LEFT MY BAG AT SCHOOL YESTERDAY, SO I NEVER DID THE HOMEWORK.

HUH?

YES. UM...

Classical Literature

UH...

"I AM DELIGHTED THOU HAST COMETH..."

I AM VERY HAPPY?

HMM...

SINCE YOU DIDN'T DO YOUR HOMEWORK, YOU CAN TIDY UP MY OFFICE AFTER SCHOOL.

Classical Literature

YES...

HE'S PRETTY STRICT...!

SHOOF

IT MEANS I CAN GO HOME LATER.

TMP TMP

MR. NACHI? ARE YOU HERE?

Classical Literature Office

CHAK

MR. NACHI, IT'S MOMOCHI FROM CLASS 1.

WHOA, WHAT A MESS.

BUT I'M KIND OF THANKFUL FOR THIS CHORE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE AN ACTUAL MOMOCHI.

HUH?!

MR. NACHI?

EEK!

I'M GLAD YOU CAME, HIMARI MOMOCHI.

I HAD YOU COME HERE TODAY BECAUSE I WANT TO HEAR MORE ABOUT MOMOCHI HOUSE.

WHAT? WHO IS HE?

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY DEMONS IN YOUR HOUSE?

OR A MYSTERIOUS BOY?

?!

BUT...

MOMOCHI HOUSE IS FAMOUS IN THIS AREA FOR BEING HAUNTED.

...IT'S MORE MYSTERIOUS AND FRIGHTENING THAN THAT.

IT'S SAID THE ESTATE SITS BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.

I...

I...

HOW DOES HE KNOW?!

I KNOW THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF RUMORS...

...BUT MY HOUSE IS JUST BIG AND OLD. IT'S ORDINARY.

SWIP

THERE'S NOTHING TO TELL.

KNOK KNOK

VUP

OH

MR. NACHI?

...

WE CAME TO HEAR MORE STORIES.

...

REALLY?

IT'S TRUE.

NOW THEN, I'LL CLEAN YOUR WORK-ROOM LIKE I PROMISED.

MOMOCHI? PERFECT TIMING! WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN TO MR. NACHI'S STORIES WITH US?

I HAVE CLEANING TO DO!

For forgetting to do my homework.

WHAT WAS WITH ALL THOSE QUESTIONS?

SAVED...

LISTENING TO YOUR STORIES IS SO EXCITING. I FEEL AS IF I'VE ENTERED A DIFFERENT WORLD.

YOU GUYS MUST BE EAGER TO LEARN. YOU COME EVERY DAY.

SURE!

BE CAREFUL. THEY'RE ANTIQUES.

WOULD YOU DUST THE ITEMS ON THOSE SHELVES?

KREE

WHICH STORY SHOULD I TELL YOU TODAY?

THIS STRANGE TEACHER SEEMS TO KNOW EVERYTHING.

...SOME-THING ABOUT HIM..

AND...

I'M THINKING ABOUT AOI TOO MUCH.

NATCHI, I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THE GHOST IN KAGOME PARK.

I'VE NEVER HEARD IT.

THAT ONE AGAIN?

...REMINDS ME OF AOI.

IT'S NOTHING REALLY. YOU KNOW KAGOME PARK, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN?

THE GHOST OF A MAN IN A SCHOOL UNIFORM APPEARS THERE AT DUSK.

AND WITHIN HIS JET-BLACK CAPE...

...SOME SAY THEY SAW COUNTLESS EYES. OTHERS SAY THEY SAW NOTHING.

NO ONE KNOWS THE TRUTH...

HE MAY BE A SPIRIT OR AN AYAKASHI.

HE APPROACHES CHILDREN WHO ARE ALONE, WHISPERING...

...“DO YOU WANT A PEEK?”

CHILLS

THE EYES IN HIS CAPE MAY BELONG TO THOSE LOST CHILDREN.

...BECAUSE EVERY CHILD WHO SEES HIM DISAPPEARS.

He draws you in.

HIS VOICE MAKES ME SHIVER. MAYBE IT'S JUST HIS SKILLFUL STORYTELLING...

EEK! THAT'S SO SCARY!

THE OTHER VERSION IS EVEN SCARIER.

TELL US A LIGHTER STORY, NATCHI.

THEN...

...HOW ABOUT THE STORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL YOKAI WHO GUARDS THIS AREA?

THOSE WHO ARE CAPTIVATED BY HIS BEAUTY
...BECOME YOKAI THEMSELVES...
...AND DESCEND INTO ANOTHER WORLD
SO...
THIS YOKAI IS PALE AND SUBLIME...
...AND VERY MYSTERIOUS.
HE IS LIKE THE MOON OR THE WIND.
...YOU MUST NEVER LOOK AT HIM.

THIS YOKAI IS PALE AND SUBLIME...

...AND VERY MYSTERIOUS.

HE IS LIKE THE MOON OR THE WIND.

THOSE WHO ARE CAPTIVATED BY HIS BEAUTY...

...BECOME YOKAI THEMSELVES...

...AND DESCEND INTO ANOTHER WORLD.

SO...

...YOU MUST NEVER LOOK AT HIM.

HUH?

YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO SEE HIM. JUST KNOWING TOO MUCH...

...MAY DRAW YOU INTO HIS WORLD FOREVER.

I WANT TO HEAR MORE ABOUT THE BEAUTIFUL YOKAI.

SEE? YOU'RE ALREADY UNDER HIS SPELL.

IS HE TALKING ABOUT THE NUE?

OKAY, THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY.

WHAT ?!

KA-CHA-K

THANK YOU FOR TELLING US STORIES, MR. NACHI.

SEE YOU TOMORROW, NATCHI.

PHEW

I GOT CHILLS FOR A SECOND THERE.

OH, SO THAT'S WHAT YOU MEANT...

YOU MAY GET SO DISTRACTED BY THESE SCARY STORIES THAT YOU FORGET TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

TMP

BACK TO MOMOCHI HOUSE?

DON'T YOU NEED TO GO?

EVERYTHING IN HERE IS INCREDIBLY OLD.

...

WHO ARE YOU, MR. NACHI?

AND HE KNOWS ABOUT THE NUE.

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE BOY WHO COULDN'T GO HOME?

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

YOU SEEM PERFECTLY FINE AROUND THESE RELICS.

IT MUST BE BECAUSE YOU'RE A MOMOCHI.

WHAT?! ARE THEY CURSED OR SOMETHING?

THIS IS MY HOBBY. I COLLECT ANTIQUES AND BOOKS WITH STORIES BEHIND THEM.

I DON'T KNOW IF THEY'RE AUTHENTIC OR NOT.

KLUNK

TAKE THIS, FOR INSTANCE.

THE "SEEING MIRROR"...

I WONDER WHAT IT WILL SHOW YOU.

THAT'S WHAT THIS ONE IS CALLED.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PEER INTO SOMEONE'S HEART?

I...WANT TO KNOW...

I THINK IT SHOWS THE ONE WHO GAZES IN IT WHAT THAT PERSON WANTS TO SEE MOST.

IT REVEALS WHAT'S INSIDE SOMEONE'S HEART.

LOOK.

SOMEONE'S TRUE FEELINGS...

TAKE A LOOK.

NO, NO, NO...!

I SHOULDN'T DO THAT...!

EVEN IF I DID WANT TO...

KR A SH

UGETSU MONOGATARI

THUD

...I'M TOO SCARED TO LOOK.

WHOA...

REEL

I'M SO SORRY, MR. NACHI!

NO, I JUST LOST MY BALANCE.

THESE BOOKS...

The Occult Digest

How to Write Ghost Stone

THESE ARE MY SECRET.

BUT NOW YOU KNOW WHO I AM.

HUH?

WHO YOU ARE?

MAGIC DICTIONARY

I TRIED TO PROVOKE YOU WITH SOME PLAUSIBLE STORIES. I'M SORRY IF I SCARED YOU.

WHEN I HEARD YOUR NAME WAS MOMOCHI, I FIGURED I WOULD BRING UP THE HAUNTED HOUSE RUMORS SO THAT YOU MIGHT TELL ME SOME REAL GHOST STORIES.

MAYBE THE NUE CONNECTION WAS ALL IN MY MIND.

WAS THAT ALL?

I COLLECT GHOST STORIES AS WELL AS ANTIQUES.

ACTUALLY, I WANT TO BE A PLAYWRIGHT. I'M A PRETTY GOOD STORYTELLER, AREN'T I?

Telling scary stories makes me popular with the students too.

I'M REALLY SORRY.

MAYBE THESE STORIES ARE TURNING ME INTO AN AYAKASHI.

FRIGHTENING A STUDENT TO SATISFY MY CURIOSITY IS INEXCUSABLE.

HEE

I UNDER-STAND.

YOU'RE AN OCCULT FREAK JUST LIKE SENOO.

I LIKE...

...YOUR STRAIGHT-FORWARD ATTITUDE.

HUH?!

I REALLY DO.

TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

BUT SENOO AND I ARE ON COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVELS. DON'T LUMP US TOGETHER!

NOD

BUT YOU'RE STILL SIMILAR ...

Classical Literature Office
OKAY...
BUT DON'T SCARE ANYONE TOO MUCH...
THIS IS OUR SECRET, OKAY?

WOOSH

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

An Unwelcome Guest

CHAPTER 21

HIMARI, WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?

YAWN

WE'RE OFF TODAY.

I'M PRETTY SURE WE ARE.

I THINK IT'S IN COMMEM-ORATION OF THE FOUNDING OF THE SCHOOL.

SHFF

HUH?

OH NO! DID I BRING THIS HOME FROM MR. NACHI'S OFFICE?

THE SEEING MIRROR...

I HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE LESSER YOKAI DON'T BREAK IT BEFORE I CAN RETURN IT TOMORROW.

IS THERE A SAFE PLACE TO STORE IT?

CHAK

I WONDER IF IT'LL BE OKAY HERE.

NOT THERE, HIMARI.

KREE

HUH?

THIS UNFOLDS INTO A MIRROR.

IT IS SAID THAT MIRRORS SHOULD NEVER FACE EACH OTHER.

OH... I'VE HEARD SUPERSTITIONS THAT SPIRITS WILL PASS BETWEEN TWO MIRRORS. PEOPLE HAVE SEEN STRANGE THINGS...

YOU SHOULD NEVER PLACE MIRRORS CLOSE TO EACH OTHER.

AFTER BREAKFAST THEY WENT OUT INTO THE GARDEN OR TO THE BACK OF THE HOUSE.

COME TO THINK OF IT, WHERE IS EVERYONE?

WHAT ABOUT HERE?! TAMAMO CAN'T REACH THIS HIGH.

...

EVERYONE IS TRYING TO BE CONSIDERATE.

I THINK THEY'RE TRYING TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE SPACE.

...

HIMARI...

IT WILL BE FINE. THERE'S NOTHING TO BE UPSET ABOUT.

EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY IF YOU STAY IN THIS HOUSE.

I WONDER IF AOI IS TRYING TO BANISH AYAKASHI.

YUKARI?

In human form again

ZUSHI!

VHMM

HEY, HIMARI!

HERE.

I DON'T REALLY WANT TO FACE HIM YET.

MR. NACHI SEEMS TO COLLECT VARIOUS ANTIQUES WITH STORIES BEHIND THEM...

...BUT THAT SEEING MIRROR...

SHOULD I SHOW IT TO AOI?

ZUSHI?!

BUT...

AREN'T THESE FLOWERS FROM MOMOCHI HOUSE? IS IT OKAY?

?

POOF

I told you not to pick me!

YOU KNOW HOW THE FLOWERS ARE...

THUP

CHEER UP, HIMARI.

IF THEY'RE FOR YOU, I CAN PICK AS MANY AS I WANT.

EVERYONE IS BEING SO NICE. IT FEELS ODD.

I'M SO SELFISH...

OH

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AOI?

EEEK!

Y-YOU SCARED ME, ISE!!

SORRY THAT I'M NOT AOI.

WHAT DOES AOI HAVE TO DO WITH THIS?!

YOU SHOULD TRY TO FORGET ABOUT HIM ONCE IN A WHILE.

HUH? WHAT WAS THAT BLACK SHADOW...?

HUH?

I'M SAY-ING...

...MAYBE YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITH SOMEONE LIKE ME.

WHAT?

ISE?!

THIS DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU AT ALL!

DOESN'T SOUND LIKE ME? HIMARI...

DON'T UNDERESTI-MATE ME.

I SENSE A PRESENCE...

SHOVE

STOP THAT! DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ISE? DID HE EAT SOMETHING BAD?

TMP

SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT.

JOLT

CHILLS

AN AYAKASHI ?!

IS SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENING TO MOMOCHI HOUSE?

NOOO

DON'T AOI AND THE OTHERS SENSE ITS PRESENCE?

GET OUT!

...

IT DIDN'T WORK.

DOES THAT MEAN IT'S A GOOD AYAKASHI?

BUT...

I SEE YOU INVITED IN ANOTHER SUSPICIOUS GUEST...

OH

KASHA ?!

WHY ARE YOU IN THE HOUSE?

DID YOU BRING THIS AYAKASHI HERE?

WHO IS YOUR GUEST?

Vo

...!

?!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE YOURSELVES CLEARLY.

HUMANS ARE SO IGNORANT.

AOI!

THANK YOU, AOI.

BUT BE CAREFUL. KASHA IS...

HE'S GONE?

YOU'RE FINE NOW, HIMARI.

HE ASKED WHO THE GUEST WAS.

HE MAY HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT THIS.

...

BUT HE SAID SOMETHING STRANGE.

REALLY?

DON'T MIND HIM. HE ALWAYS APPEARS UNEXPECTEDLY.

!

THIS MIRROR YOU BROUGHT HOME...

THE SEEING MIR-ROR...

D-DOES IT HAVE MYSTERIOUS POWERS?

YES... BUT NOT IN A GOOD WAY.

YOU SHOULD BREAK IT HERE AND NOW.

OKAY, HIMARI?

HUH?

BUT IT BELONGS TO MR. NACHI.

MR. NACHI SAID THE MIRROR SHOWS WHAT'S INSIDE SOMEONE'S HEART.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO TURN IT BACK INTO A NORMAL MIRROR?

...

DID YOU WANT TO SEE INSIDE MY HEART?

HUH?

I LOVE YOU.

YOU DON'T NEED A MIRROR FOR THAT.

NO, THE MIRROR JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN MY BAG...

AOI...

SO...

I CAN NEVER LEAVE MOMOCHI HOUSE.

BUT...

...I CAN'T ALWAYS BE WITH YOU...

HIMARI...

I'LL STAY WITH YOU FOREVER.

LEAN

AOI...! I'M FINE WITH THAT.

DON'T EVER LEAVE ME.

HUG

AOI...?

I'M...

...NOT GOING ANYWHERE, AOI.

HUH?

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT...

I WANT TO FREE YOU.

REALLY?

YOU WANT TO BE TRAPPED IN THIS HOUSE WITH ME?

THAT SIMPLY ISN'T POSSIBLE.

I'M ALREADY AN AYAKASHI.

...

I'M NOT FRIGHTENED.

BUT...

ARE YOU OKAY WITH THIS, AOI?

NUE...

DO I FRIGHTEN YOU?

SHOVE

YOU'RE NOT AOI.

I SEE...

HIMARI ...?

AOI WOULD...

AT A TIME LIKE THIS, AOI WOULD...

NO!

...

THAT'S RIGHT. I'M NUE.

OH

...

GIVE ME BACK THE MIRROR!

...

GRAB

AOI DOESN'T SMILE LIKE THAT.

YOU'RE NOT AOI, BUT YOU'RE NOT THE NUE EITHER.

THIS MOMOCHI HOUSE...

...ISN'T REAL.

I CAN PICK AS MANY AS I WANT.

THERE'S NOTHING TO BE UPSET ABOUT.

YOU SHOULD TRY TO FORGET ABOUT HIM ONCE IN A WHILE.

WHO IS YOUR GUEST?

HIMARI!

WHAT HAPPENED?

HOW DID I WANDER INTO THIS STRANGE WORLD?!

HOW DO I GET BACK?

NO

THAT BLACK SHADOW...

COULD THIS...

...BE...

...ME?

SO THIS WORLD...

...IS WITHIN THE MIRROR.

THE "SEEING MIRROR"... THAT'S WHAT THIS ONE IS CALLED.

LET'S STAY HERE AND FORGET ABOUT ALL THE BAD THINGS.

VHHM

WHAT'S WRONG?

NO... IT'S WRONG...

THIS WORLD IS WHAT'S INSIDE MY HEART. IS THIS WHAT I TRULY WANT?

VHHM

THAT'S RIGHT, HIMARI.

NO!

AOI HURT YOUR FEELINGS. JUST FORGET HIM.

THIS ISN'T WHAT I WANT.

COME TO ME.

WE CAN LIVE HERE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

...

THIS ISN'T RIGHT.

REEL

AOI...

...REJECTED ME.

I WAS DEVASTATED, BUT...

...

I KNOW THERE IS MORE I CAN DO.

WHEN I CONFESSED, FOR A MOMENT HE TRULY SMILED.

THIS BLACK SHADOW IS MY PAIN.

YUP

IT'S MY SORROW.

BUT...

...I WON'T RUN FROM IT.

I NEED A LARGER PORTAL.

NOW HOW DO I GET OUT?

DASH

I DON'T THINK I CAN EXIT THROUGH THIS MIRROR.

THIS WORLD ISN'T REAL!

HE'S WAITING FOR ME.

I WANT TO GO BACK.

SHIVER

I KNOW!

AOI...!

THE BIG MIRROR IN MOMOCHI HOUSE!

BAM

HUH?!

SNIFF

I WANT TO RETURN.

SH

THE TWO MIRRORS ARE FACING EACH OTHER!

GASP

MOMOCHI!

JUMP

GYAAH!

AAH!

LOOM

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MOMOCHI?!

TWO OR THREE MINUTES, I THINK...

HOW LONG WAS I OUT?

SORRY I WORRIED YOU.

...AFTER YOU LOOKED INTO THE SEEING MIRROR.

I WAS WORRIED. YOU FAINTED...

A DREAM! That's right.

N-NO! IT WAS JUST DREAMING, THAT'S ALL!

BUT DURING THAT SHORT TIME...

...YOU HAD A STRANGE EXPERIENCE. YOU TRULY ARE A MOMOCHI.

THE SEEING MIRROR...

A DREAM ABOUT...A FAKE WORLD INSIDE THE MIRROR?

A DREAM, HUH? BUT IF THINGS HADN'T WORKED OUT...

MAYBE IT'S MEANT TO DISPEL THE SORROW IN ONE'S OWN HEART.

MAYBE IT DOESN'T PEER INTO PEOPLE'S HEARTS.

...YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN ERASED FROM REALITY.

YOU MAY HAVE NEVER RETURNED.

I-I TOLD YOU IT WAS A DREAM!

FINE.

I'LL LOCK UP THE MIRROR JUST TO BE SAFE...

Heh heh heh...

Maybe I shouldn't have told him.

DON'T ABUSE THAT NOW.

MR. NACHI MIGHT USE IT TO GET IDEAS FOR MORE GHOST STORIES.

I WON'T USE IT AS LONG AS YOU TELL ME SOME OF YOUR STRANGE STORIES.

OKAY, MOMOCHI?

A MYSTERIOUS EXPERIENCE.

OKAY.

BUT ONLY MY DREAMS.

I FEEL LIKE I'M FORGETTING SOME-THING.

WAS IT A DREAM OR WAS IT REAL? I DON'T KNOW...

WELCOME BACK.

TMP

!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS IN AOI'S HEART.

I'M HOME!

...EVEN IF IT'S A LITTLE PAINFUL.

I LOVE HIM...

BUT MY FEELINGS FOR HIM WON'T CHANGE.

Chapter 21/End

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

Domestic Training Is Impossible

CHAPTER 22

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

I HAPPENED TO GLIMPSE INTO THE SEEING MIRROR AND ENTERED A STRANGE WORLD.

IN THAT ILLUSION, I RECLAIMED MY TRUE FEELINGS.

AOI REJECTED ME, BUT MY FEELINGS FOR HIM WON'T CHANGE.

NOW...

STRETCH

GOOD MORNING!

HM?

MEAGER

I APOL-OGIZE, HIMARI. DRIVING OUT THE AYAKASHI IS TAKING LONGER THAN EXPECTED. THERE WASN'T TIME TO MAKE A FULL BREAKFAST.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I LOVE DRIED SARDINES! I'M THANKFUL YOU COOKED SOMETHING FOR ME.

...MY FIRST PRIORITY IS TO FIND A WAY TO GET AOI OUT OF THIS HOUSE!

THIS IS UNUSUAL FOR YUKARI...

KLAK

I'LL CALL AOI.

GLOOM

THUD

AOI?!

TROMP

!!

TROMP TROMP TROMP TROMP

WHOA! AOI?!

SLUFF

HIMARI ...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I thought you had been murdered.

SMILE

I'M FINE.

IT'S NOTHING—

KA

BOOM

RAGGED

I-I'M REALLY FINE...

HE SAYS THAT, BUT...

...MOMOCHI HOUSE IS OVERRUN WITH AYAKASHI.

GYAAH

SPOOSH

AND IT'S ONLY GETTING WORSE.

H H H R

M

AOI IS IN A SLUMP?

YEAH.

AOI IS HAVING TROUBLE CREATING SEALS. AND THE ONES HE DOES PLACE QUICKLY BREAK.

THAT'S WHY THERE ARE AYAKASHI EVERYWHERE.

IT'S JUST...!

HIS EYES ARE GLAZED OVER.

SOMTIMES AYAKASHI NEED GENTLER SEALS...

AOI IS GIFTED, BUT HE'S SELF-TAUGHT, SO HIS SPELLS ARE UNSTRUCTURED.

ONCE HE'S THROWN OFF BALANCE, IT'S HARD TO GET HIM CENTERED AGAIN.

NEVER-THELESS...

DON'T WORRY, AOI. YOU'RE A GENIUS!

FIND SOME STRUC-TURE.

Come on, Aoi!

I'M TRYING ...

THEY'RE SIMPLY INDULG-ING HIM!

SUFF

!

THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?

I'M FINE. REALLY.

SWIP

AOI?

IN ANY CASE...

...HE'LL RETURN TO NORMAL IN TIME. HE'S AOI, AFTER ALL.

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THE UNRULINESS FOR A WHILE...

HOW VERY COMPLACENT.

?!

FWISH

GR!

PWIK

N

THIS HOUSE IS AS CRAMPED AS EVER.

BOOM

URK!

FWUFF

NEKO-BABA...!

SHE'S HUGE...!

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, AOI. YOU STILL HAVEN'T GROWN MUCH, MEOW.

URK.

PERHAPS YUKARI ISN'T FEEDING YOU PROPERLY.

GLARE

I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT AOI IN THE CARE OF AN EX-HUMAN.

YUKARI TAKES EXCELLENT CARE OF ME.

YET MOMOCHI HOUSE IS IN THIS CONDI-TION?

I served him dried sardines, so I can't say anything in my defense.

THAT'S MY FAULT.

EVEN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD IS TALKING ABOUT THIS.

IF AYAKASHI ARE ALLOWED FREE ACCESS TO THIS HOUSE...

...UNSAVORY TYPES WILL WANDER IN BEFORE LONG.

POOF

POOF

POOF

GO GET 'EM!

GRIN

YOU'D BETTER LEAVE THIS TO ME, MEOW!

So ♥ cute!

MEOW

THOOP

...ARE DISAP-PEARING!

THE AYAKASHI RUNNING RAMPANT IN MOMOCHI HOUSE...

MEOW

THOOP

MEOW

MEOW

MEOW

MEOW

MEOW

THOOP

HERE'S AN AYAKASHI EVEN I'VE HEARD ABOUT!

A NEKOMATA!

IT'S AN OLD NEKOMATA TRICK CALLED "REJOURN."

IT SENDS AYAKASHI BACK TO WHERE THEY CAME FROM.

*A *nekomata* is a mythical two-tailed cat yokai.

ZWISH

AOI...

I AM SO VERY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP...

...I THINK IT'S TIME YOU SHAPED UP.

FLUP

THAT'S MUCH BETTER.

THUD

?!

?!

WHAT?!

...AOI.

CHOOSE A WIFE...

AOI IS TO MARRY AN AYAKASHI?!

ARE THESE... PICTURE BRIDES?!

THEY'RE ALL AYAKASHI PRINCESSES OF GOOD LINEAGE THAT HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY ME, MEOW.

THANK YOU FOR WORRYING ABOUT ME...

...BUT I'M A LITTLE TOO YOUNG FOR THIS.

SILENCE!

I'VE HEARD...

...ABOUT THAT PERSON WHO USES EVIL PAPER SEALS...

...AND THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND HIM.

HIMARI ...

W-WAIT A MINUTE!

AS A FULL-FLEDGED AYAKASHI, YOU SHOULD WED...

...AND TAKE THIS MORE SERIOUSLY.

OR YOU MAY ENDANGER THE LIVES OF EVERYONE WHO LIVES IN MOMOCHI HOUSE.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND, AOI?

VEEN

I HAVEN'T INTRODUCED YOU. THIS IS HIMARI MOMOCHI.

AS HER NAME IMPLIES, SHE'S THE LANDLADY OF THIS HOUSE. SHE LIVES WITH US NOW.

H-HOW DO YOU DO?

BOW

EEK...

UM... ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE SAYING EARLIER...

I'M THE LAND-LADY!

PERHAPS GOOD SNACKS, MEOW.

HUMANS DON'T EVEN MAKE GOOD MAIDS.

SNIFF

MOMOCHI ...?

I THOUGHT I SMELLED A HUMAN. SO IT'S YOU?

WHAT?

ABOUT AOI GETTING MARRIED...

YOU SAY THAT IT'S FOR THE SAKE OF MOMOCHI HOUSE, BUT AS THE LANDLADY OF THIS PLACE...

...I CAN'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN.

I'M REALLY PUSHING IT...

I DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO STOP HIM...

...BUT...

AOI ISN'T AN AYAKASHI. HE'S HUMAN.

HMPH.

YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.

YOU SAY AOI IS HUMAN?

I'M ALREADY AN AYAKASHI.

THOSE WORDS WERE UTTERED INSIDE THE SEEING MIRROR'S ILLUSION.

THAT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH REALITY.

SO...

Hi!

Hey!

I KNOW THE NUE IS AN AYAKASHI.

BUT AOI IS HUMAN.

WHAT DID SHE MEAN?

F-FIELD-WORK...?

WE'RE PUTTING TOGETHER A TEAM TO RESEARCH THE KAGOME PARK GHOST STORY!

ZOOM

ARE YOU LISTENING, MOMOCHI?!

OH

?!

S-SORRY, COULD YOU REPEAT THAT, SENOO?

I SAID ...

WE WANT YOU TO BE A PART OF OUR FIELDWORK GROUP!

NOW LISTEN.

I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR FUN! THERE IS A LEGITIMATE EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE!

WE'RE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. ONLY KIDS INVESTIGATE GHOST STORIES...

JUST IGNORE HIM, HIMARI.

THE GHOST?

...THERE HAVE BEEN SOME RECENT SIGHTINGS OF THE GHOST.

BUT...

THE KAGOME PARK GHOST STORY WAS POPULAR WHEN WE WERE KIDS.

IS THE MYSTERIOUS MAN SPOTTED WEARING A SCHOOL CAP AND BLACK COAT A REAL GHOST?

IF HE'S A HUMAN UP TO NO GOOD, WE SHOULD TREAT THIS AS NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME PREVENTION.

PSST

HE'S BEEN INFLUENCED BY MR. NACHI.

OH...

MR. NACHI WILL PROBABLY BE INTERESTED TOO.

AND IF HE'S A GHOST, WE SHOULD COMPARE THE NEW AND OLD SIGHTINGS TO FIND THE SOURCE OF THESE STORIES.

WE CAN USE OUR FINDINGS FOR OUR SUMMER RESEARCH PROJECT!

IF WE ALL DID IT AS A GROUP...

THAT WOULD BE GOOD.

COME TO THINK OF IT, THIS AREA HAS ALL KINDS OF GHOST STORIES.

THE KAGOME PARK GHOST THAT EATS CHILDREN...

YEAH.

THE GIGANTIC TALKING SACK...THE SNAKE PALACE IN THE MOUNTAINS...

ISN'T THE KAGOME PARK GHOST SUPPOSED TO GIVE YOU A CURSED PAPER SEAL OR SOMETHING?

YEAH, I HEARD THAT.

KRRK

I WOULDN'T LOOK INTO THAT KAGOME PARK STORY.

!

I...MAY HAVE SEEN HIM AS A KID.

SUFF

I DON'T REMEMBER IT WELL.

IT WASN'T A GHOST...

I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT IT.

HAYATO?

THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU, HIDAKA.

HAYATO'S MEMORIES ARE MUDDLED...

WHEN WE WERE LITTLE...

...I REMEMBER RUMORS OF KIDS BEING EATEN...

...BY THE KAGOME PARK GHOST.

BUT I KNOW ALL THE KIDS WHO GREW UP IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD AND NOT ONE OF THEM HAS GONE MISSING.

RIGHT, SENOO?!

Y-YES!

THEY'RE ALL CHILDHOOD FRIENDS...

ANYWAY, HIDAKA...

THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

YEAH. BUT I REMEMBER SAYING...

...THAT A FRIEND OF MINE DISAPPEARED OR SOMETHING.

ZARF

ARE HIS MEMORIES OF AOI GETTING MIXED UP WITH THE GHOST STORY ABOUT MISSING KIDS?

UM...

I WAS JUST WONDER-ING...

YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.

DONG

DONG

BUT IF THEY'RE ALL CHILDHOOD FRIENDS...

OH

IT'S TRUE.

I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT BEFORE, BUT...

DONG

DONG

NO.

THAT'S...

WAS THERE A FAMILY NAMED NANAMORI...

...AOI'S FAMILY NAME.

...IN THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD?

DOES THAT MEAN THE ENTIRE NANAMORI HOUSEHOLD DISAP-PEARED?

OR...

IT FEELS ODD LOOKING INTO THIS ON MY OWN.

BUT I AM CURIOUS...

THUD THUD THUD

JOLT

I'D RATHER HEAR IT DIRECTLY FROM AOI.

AOI!!

WHERE ARE YOU HIDING?

PEEK

HEY, MAID-IN-TRAINING, I DON'T SEE YOUR HANDS MOVING.

Y-YES, MA'AM!

THUD THUD THUD

SIGH

I CAN'T BE THINKING ABOUT THIS WHILE NEKOBABA IS HERE.

YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE A BRIDE TODAY!

THUD THUD THUD

THUD

Eek!

LET'S SEE.

KOFF KOFF

KRASH

WHERE DID YOU SAY YOU CLEANED?

OH COME ON... You're making it a mess on purpose.

I'M ALMOST DONE.

UNGH

SHALL I DEMOTE YOU FROM MAID-IN-TRAINING TO A SNACK?

I'LL DO MY BEST...

GRRR

I DON'T WANT AOI TO GET MARRIED, BUT...

WHAT?! HOW MANY ROOMS DO YOU THINK MOMOCHI HOUSE HAS?!

CLEAN EVERY SINGLE ROOM BY TONIGHT. I DON'T WANT TO SEE ONE SPECK OF DUST!

SHIFT

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, HIMARI?

YUKARI!

R-ROOM #37... FINISHED!

FLOMP

...THIS IS BRUTAL!!

How long will this continue?

THANK YOU! I'M STARVING.

HERE'S SOMETHING TO EAT.

I WOULD HELP YOU, BUT NEKOBABA WOULD SAY YOU CHEATED.

...IS AN OLD, TEMPERA-MENTAL AYAKASHI.

NEKO-BABA...

BAFFLED

PLUS I'M SCARED OF NEKO-BABA...

WE ALWAYS LEAVE THE CLEANING TO YOU. IT'S A GOOD CHANCE FOR ME TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU DO.

IT'S FINE.

I'M SORRY TO PUT YOU THROUGH THIS.

AS A CHILD, AOI TOOK TO NEKOBABA.

EVER SINCE, NEKOBABA HAS COME BACK TO LOOK IN ON AOI AS IF HE WERE HER OWN.

SHE MUST WORRY ABOUT AOI.

...AOI'S SLUMP...

SPEAK-ING OF...

Okay!

I WANT NEKOBABA TO ACCEPT ME AS A MEMBER OF THIS HOUSE-HOLD.

I'M USELESS IN THAT DEPARTMENT, BUT AT LEAST I CAN CLEAN.

NEKOBABA HAS GOTTEN RID OF ALL THE AYAKASHI INFILTRATING THIS PLACE WHILE AOI'S BEEN IN A SLUMP.

WHETHER HE REALIZES IT OR NOT, IT SEEMS THAT REJECTING YOU...

...HAS THROWN HIM OFF BALANCE.

BLUSH

DOES THAT MEAN...

O-OKAY.

DON'T OVEREXERT YOURSELF, HIMARI.

DOES THAT MEAN...

AOI? WITH A GIRL LIKE THAT...?

JUST FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND.

THAT'S RIGHT.

SNUB SNUB

KNOWING THAT MAKES ME FEEL AWKWARD AGAIN...

My back hurts!

I'M HOME!

WHAT'S WRONG, NEKOBABA?

WHAT'LL I DO?

IT'S GONE. WHAT'LL I DO?

OH DEAR...

OH NO! WHERE DID YOU LOSE IT?

WILL YOU FIND IT FOR ME, MEOW?

WHAT'LL I DO?

I'VE LOST A HAIR ORNAMENT I TREASURE.

I MAY HAVE DROPPED IT AS I WAS SEARCHING ALL OVER THE HOUSE FOR AOI.

ALL OVER THE HOUSE...

I-I'LL TRY MY BEST TO FIND IT. LEAVE IT TO ME.

REALLY?

GRIN

Was it here?

Or there?

No..

DID I HAVE IT IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE?

OR...

NO, NOT THERE.

ON TOP OF THE SHELF...

You're right...

OUCH.

THE TRUTH IS...

YOU'RE YOUNG. DON'T BE SO PITIFUL.

KNOCK YOURSELF OUT LOOKING FOR IT.

HEH HEH HEH

SHE'LL NEVER FIND IT.

I'VE HIDDEN THE HAIR ORNAMENT IN MY FUR.

S-SORRY.

HEEZE

STILL HAVEN'T FOUND IT? WHAT ARE YOU GOOD FOR? MAYBE YOU'RE GOOD TO EAT...

THAT HAIR ORNAMENT WAS A GIFT FROM MY GREAT-GREAT GRANDMOTHER. WHAT'LL I DO?

JUST GIVE UP ALREADY!

REEL REEL

WHERE HAVEN'T I LOOKED?

...I BATHED IN THE POND.

COME TO THINK OF IT...

THE POND?!

SAFETY FIRST

MEOW ?!

KAKA

SNIP

SHE FINALLY RAN OUT IN TEARS!

TMP TMP TMP

SAFETY FIRST

ARE YOU THAT DESPERATE TO WIN ME OVER?!

!

TROMP TROMP

WHAT ?!

W-WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?

I'M GOING TO SEARCH THE POND.

SPLASH!!

...

IT'S AN IMPORTANT FAMILY HEIRLOOM, RIGHT?

I'LL FIND IT. DON'T WORRY.

...

SWISH

SPLASH

SPLASH

I'M SLEEPY. I'M GOING TO BED!

OH? GOOD NIGHT.

SPLASH

SPLASH

HMM...

IT'S NOT HERE...

IF I DON'T FIND IT SOON, IT MAY RUST.

SLIP

YEEK!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, HIMARI?

AOI...!

SORRY.

I'VE BEEN HIDING FROM NEKOBABA. SORRY I'M LATE.

A-AOI!

I KNOW IT'S SUMMER, BUT YOU CAN'T BE IN THE POND AT NIGHT. YOU'LL CATCH COLD.

YOU'RE ALL DIRTY.

SUFF

SNIP

NO.

ANYWAY, LET'S GET OUT OF THE WATER. I'LL GIVE NEKOBABA A NEW HAIR ORNAMENT.

OH...

THEN I'LL HELP.

I WANT TO LOOK A LITTLE MORE.

SPLASH

WHY ARE YOU TRYING SO HARD?

WHY...?

SPLASH

SWISH

SPLASH

SPLASH

I FIGURE A FAMILY HEIRLOOM MUST BE PRICELESS...

...

I SEE. YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT.

WHAT ABOUT YOU...

...AOI?

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING FROM YOUR FAMILY THAT YOU TREASURE?

I...

I HAVE EVERYONE HERE AT MOMOCHI HOUSE.

OUR TIME TOGETHER IS PRECIOUS TO ME.

THAT'S WHY...

AND WHY...

...I LOVE HIM.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY BEFORE YOU CAME HERE...?

...I WANT TO GET TO KNOW HIM BETTER.

YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.

HEY, AOI...

IS THAT WRONG?

HUH?

OH...

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I DID HAVE ONE...

I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LOOK THAT WAY BEFORE.

Chapter 22/End

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

Some Like It Hot in the Dark?

CHAPTER 23

ZWOOSH

FWIP

SLOOSH

HIS TRANSFORMATION...

AOI!

THUD

AOI IS STILL NOT HIMSELF.

YUKARI SAID AOI'S SLUMP HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIM REJECTING ME...

...BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.

THE WAY HE LOOKED BACK THEN...

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I DID HAVE ONE...

LO O M

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

EEEK!

BUT THAT WAS SOMETHING ELSE.

I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT...

I SENSED IT FROM THE START.

AOI IS HIDING SOMETHING.

...OTHER THINGS TO LOOK FOR?

DON'T YOU HAVE...

HUH?

S-SORRY, I WAS LOOKING FOR YOUR HAIR ORNAMENT, AND...

OH

... NEVER MIND THAT ALREADY.

THUD

VEEN

WHO NEEDS A MAID WHO ONLY DOES WHAT SHE'S TOLD?

...CAN I DO FOR AOI?

WHAT...

...

NEKO-BABA...

I HAD TO COME BECAUSE YOU'RE SO DENSE.

I CAME HERE BECAUSE AOI HASN'T BEEN HIMSELF.

SNF

HIMARI ...

I'M SORRY TO TROUBLE YOU.

WHAT HAPPENED, YUKARI? ALL THE LIGHTS ARE OUT.

BAM

WHOA! IT'S PITCH BLACK!

MOMOCHI HOUSE IS LIT BY AYAKASHI LANTERNS, NOT BY ELECTRICITY.

IT SEEMS THE STRAY AYAKASHI THAT CAME THROUGH THE HOUSE GOT ALL OF OUR LANTERNS WET. NOW THEY WON'T LIGHT.

OH

I'LL HELP YOU–

I'LL HAVE TO DRY THEM ONE BY ONE. DINNER MAY BE A LITTLE LATE.

HIMARI?

NO.

LET'S TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE DARK.

KLUP

TOK

SHIMMER

W...

WHAT IS THIS...?

BLUB

BLUB

HUH? BLACK-OUT...?

WE'RE HAVING A BLACKOUT HOTPOT FOR DINNER TONIGHT!

EVERYONE WILL PUT THEIR OWN INGREDIENTS INTO THE POT.

THE ONLY CONDITION IS THAT IS MUST BE EDIBLE!

WILL YOU BE LUCKY OR UNLUCKY? IT'S UP TO YOUR INSTINCTS AND TO FATE!

You all look scary.

OKAY, AOI.

YOU GO FIRST!

ME FIRST?!

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER. THERE'S NOTHING INEDIBLE IN THERE. PROBABLY.

BUT MOST OF THE PARTICIPANTS ARE AYAKASHI...

ALL RIGHT. HERE I GO!

PLUK

BOOM

...FILLED WITH MUSTARD.

PHOO

I PUT THAT IN. IT'S A TOFU POUCH...

I'M RELIEVED.

I'M SO SORRY. I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D PICK MINE...

Are you all right?

I think so.

SORRY, AOI...

I'M DOING THIS TO RESTORE YOUR INSTINCTS.

I HOPE YOU GET MY FISHCAKE SHAPED LIKE A FOUR-LEAF CLOVER!

OKAY. IT'S OUR TURN!

WOMP

You can do it!

KUDDUHAAT

What? You like that?

Straw-berry mochi!

GOOD GRIEF...

...

That one is mine!

WELL...

DOESN'T SHE KNOW THAT HUMANS AND AYAKASHI SHOULDN'T MINGLE LIKE THIS?

MOMOCHI HOUSE OPERATES A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY.

Huh? What the hell is this?

>_<

Is this alive?

You always get lucky Himari

WAIT, THAT'S...

HIMARI.

THIS IS...

...HIMARI MOMOCHI, HUH?

I HAVEN'T LAUGHED THIS HARD IN A LONG TIME.

THIS IS MY FIRST BLACKOUT HOTPOT PARTY, BUT IT'S FUN.

THANK YOU.

SUFF

I HOPE AOI FEELS BETTER.

GET OUT OF THE POT!

HEY!

SPOOKY

I'LL GET A LIGHT FROM THE OVEN. STAY WHERE YOU ARE, EVERYONE.

POOF

THE POT RAN OVER AND EXTINGUISHED THE FLAME.

Oh no!

FIZZLE

What? Is this a rea radish?

!

WATCH OUT, HIMARI...

SHOVE

B-BMP

SORRY...

IT'S DARK... I'LL GET OFF YOU.

O... OKAY.

B-BMP

B-BMP

HUH?

GRAB

...

POOM

OH!

THE LIGHTS ARE BACK ON.

W-WHAT'S WRONG?

...

NOTHING.

VUP

VUP

NO, THIS ISN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE.

AH, YOU TWO...

THE AYAKASHI LANTERNS MUST BE DRY.

LET'S CONTINUE WITH THE HOTPOT PARTY!

BUT IT'S NOT DARK ANY-MORE...

AOI LOOKED LIKE THE NUE.

WAS I SEEING THINGS?

THUD

AAH!

YOU'RE LOOKING UGLY THIS MORNING.

SIGH

SO SUD-DENLY?

AND...

HUH?

YOU MEAN IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM?

Shh!

WHAT'S GOING ON, NEKO-BABA?

EVERY-ONE'S STILL ASLEEP.

I'M THINKING OF GOING BACK TO MY LAIR.

AHEM

...I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND YOUR HAIR ORNAMENT.

SPEAK-ING OF WHICH...

CLINK

IT REAP-PEARED.

HUH?

I'M GIVING IT TO YOU.

HERE.

I'M SO GLAD!

IT'S BEAUTIFUL.

It's bigger than I thought

BUT...

...I CAN'T ACCEPT SUCH A VALUABLE HEIRLOOM.

SHEEN

PLUS IT'S TOO BIG FOR ME TO WEAR.

THIS WAS ORIGINALLY A LANTERN.

I'M NOT CERTAIN, BUT...

...IT'S SUPPOSED TO LIGHT THE WAY OF THE PATH TO TRUTH, BUT ONLY ONCE.

KLINK

HIMARI...

CAN YOU BE LIKE THIS LANTERN?

THE PATH TO TRUTH...

I CAN'T ACCEPT SUCH A VALUABLE GIFT.

AOI IS LOST.

ALL THIS TIME...

...SINCE THAT DAY.

THAT BOY...

THE DAY HE WANDERED INTO MOMOCHI HOUSE.

NOW HE'S PROBABLY...

...STARTING TO FORGET HOW TO GET BACK.

IS THAT WHY...

HE STRAYED AWAY FROM THE HUMAN WORLD...

FURTHER-MORE...

IF HE STAYS WITH US AYAKASHI, WE CAN SHIELD HIM FROM SORROW.

OF COURSE THAT DOESN'T MEAN HE WISHES TO RETURN TO HIS FORMER HOME.

...HE HAD SUCH...

...A DISTANT LOOK...

...IN HIS EYES?

...EVEN IF HE WANTS TO RETURN...

...IT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOW THAT HE'S AT MOMOCHI HOUSE.

IT WOULD BE BEST FOR HIM TO BECOME AN AYAKASHI.

BUT...!

NO ONE SHOULD BE ROBBED OF THEIR MEMORIES.

RIGHT...

...NEKOBABA?

I'LL LEAVE YOU WITH THAT TASK.

CAN YOU BE HIS GUIDING LIGHT?

...HIMARI MOMOCHI?

CAN YOU DO IT...

I...

CAN I DO IT?

...WANT TO HELP AOI FIND HIS WAY BACK.

I CHECKED THE TOWN REGISTER.

THERE WAS NO FAMILY NAMED NANAMORI.

GOOD MORNING, HIMARI.

I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID THE OTHER DAY.

RUI...

I WANT TO REACH HIM.

AH!

MAYBE "NANAMORI" WILL APPEAR ON AN OLDER MAP!

MOMOCHI!

NO, I DON'T THINK SO.

SNP

...

DOES THIS NANAMORI FAMILY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE KAGOME PARK GHOST STORY?

WHAT A CURIOUS TIME TO MENTION THAT.

Classical Literature Office

OH. UM...

WHAT IS THIS FOR?

I DON'T HAVE ONE HERE, BUT I COULD PROBABLY GET ONE.

AN OLD TOWN MAP?

HE'S SUCH AN OCCULT FREAK!

KEEN

KEEN

IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT, MR. NACHI.

YOU TRULY ARE A MOMOCHI!

ARE YOU INVESTIGATING AN INTERESTING INCIDENT?

I'LL SEE YOU TOMOR-ROW!

CHAK

SIGH

MR. NACHI IS AN INCURABLE OCCULT FREAK.

HE'S ACTING SUSPI-CIOUS!

SMILE

DON'T BE SUSPICIOUS. I WON'T MISUSE YOUR INFORMA-TION.

IT'S NOT A GHOST STORY, MR. NACHI!

TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT, MOMOCHI! PLEASE!

TMP

TMP

COME TO THINK OF IT...

HUH?

OH

I'D LIKE TO READ ONE OF HIS SCRIPTS SOMEDAY...

HE TOLD ME ABOUT HIMSELF...

...A BUNCH OF BOOKS FELL ON MR. NACHI.

AFTER THAT...

WHEN I LOOKED INTO THAT MIRROR AND FAINTED...

SOMETHING HAS BEEN IN THE BACK OF MY MIND.

JUST...

...HOW MUCH...

...WAS PART OF THE ILLUSION?

I SEE...

...

HAS AOI GROWN UP?

WHO IS THAT BEHIND YOU?

Chapter 23/End

"Who is that behind you?" is from a song sung during Kagome Kagome, a children's game.

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

I WANT THAT CHILD.

WHICH CHILD?

I'LL BE FINE, YUKARI.

CAN YOU LOOK AFTER THINGS BY YOURSELF, AOI?

I HAVE TO GO TO THE SACRED POND FOR A WHILE.

DON'T LET ANY STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE.

BONUS STORY

Child's Play

HEY...!

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT. LET'S DO THAT.

*"I want that child/Which child?/Let's talk about it" are lyrics sung during a children's game called *Hana Ichi Monme*. The game is similar to Red Rover.

PEEK

HAYATO...

HEY!

LET'S PLAY!

...THE LOSER HAS TO DO WHATEVER THE WINNER SAYS!

HOW ABOUT CAPTURE THE FLAG? WE CAN PLAY IN THE YARD.

SOUNDS GOOD!

AND...

TMP

YOU SCARED ME.

WHY? WAS SOMEONE THERE?

NO, IT'S NOTHING.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO PLAY?

HAPPY TO WIN.

SAD TO LOSE.

PLOP

THIS IS WHAT YOU GET FOR LOSING!

IT'S ONLY A BUCKET.

CUT IT OUT! I'LL STOP GROW-ING!

ARE YOU SURE? I'M BETTER AT THIS GAME THAN YOU ARE.

SWIK

SWIK

THAT'LL HURT.

NO WAY!

OKAY, MY TURN. COME HERE!

I FINALLY WIN!

UMPH

I give up!

AAAH!

THEN I'LL DO THIS!

I'LL GET IN TROUBLE IF WE WRECK A FUTON.

NOT IF YOU'RE WRAPPED IN A FUTON.

You'll be like a sandbag!

Gyaah!

HA HA HA HA

OH.

I'D BETTER GO.

THUMP

...

LET'S PLAY A LITTLE LONGER.

I'M LONELY.

COME OVER HERE.

TOGETHER FOREVER.

I CAN'T GO OVER THERE.

WHY NOT?

BECAUSE I'M SCARED...

...OF THE DEMON.

I WANT THAT CHILD.

HUH?

I WANT THAT CHILD.

SORRY.

I CAN'T GO OVER THERE...

...BECAUSE YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT...

I'M ALREADY...

KLATT

KLATT

KLATT

KLATT

THIS CHILD...

I WANT THAT CHILD.

...WAS SLEEPING QUIETLY AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL. HE WAS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING AN AYAKASHI.

WHY DID YOU WAKE HIM UP?

YOU WIN THE GAME.

YOU MANAGED TO KEEP YOUR BODY, KID.

I...

I COULDN'T TELL WHICH CHILD, SO I MADE A DOLL...

WE'VE NEVER EVEN MET.

...NEVER SAID ANYTHING TO YOU.

I WANT THAT CHILD.

YOU SAID, "I WANT THAT CHILD."

...

I GUESS YOU CAN'T HEAR YOURSELF.

HUMANS ARE STRANGE.

WHICH CHILD?

Bonus Story/End

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

A famous ayakashi called the Nekomata finally makes an appearance in this volume of *Momochi House*.
I've always wanted to incorporate a cat ayakashi, but I struggled to come up with an original design... (I'm blaming it on the ayakashi...)
Then one day I saw a photo on Twitter of a kitty that belonged to the producer of the CD drama. I was immediately struck by its feline grace and power. I'd like to take this opportunity to apologize for turning that kitty into Nekobaba, a mean old-lady cat.

The DEMON PRINCE *of* MOMOCHI HOUSE

石笛あや
Aya Shouoto

The DEMON PRINCE of MOMOCHI HOUSE

I drew the cover art featuring
Aoi and Ise, master and servant,
imagining they were going to a
festival. Japanese festivals evoke
a sense of flamboyance tinged
with fleeting melancholy that
I find fascinating.

-Aya Shouoto

Aya Shouoto was born on December 25.
Her hobbies are traveling, staying at hotels,
sewing and daydreaming. She currently
lives in Tokyo and enjoys listening to J-pop
anime theme songs while she works.

The Demon Prince of Momochi House

Volume 6
Shojo Beat Edition

Story and Art by Aya Shouoto

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THE DEMON PRINCE OF MOMOCHI HOUSE is rated T for Teen and is recommended for ages 13 and up.
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